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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S JUNE 23 MEETING WITH
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PRIME MINISTER PATRICK MANNING

CLASSIFIED BY WHA ASSISTANT SECRETARY THOMAS A. SHANNON
FOR E.O. 12958, REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

¶1. (U) June 23, 2008, 11:15 a.m., Washington, D.C.

¶2. (U) Participants:

UNITED STATES
Deputy Secretary Negroponte
WHA Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon
WHA/CAR Velia De Pirro (Notetaker)

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Prime Minister Patrick Manning
Ambassador from Trinidad & Tobago Glenda Morean-Phillip
Deputy Chief of Mission Paul Byam
Political Counselor Nieves Callender

SUMMARY

¶3. (C) Prime Minister Manning focused the discussion on Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to push for a collective CARICOM solution to rising crime and drug trafficking in the Caribbean. He highlighted Trinidad and Tobago's acquisition of intercept vessels and radars, and its plans to refurbish surveillance planes. Manning indicated his hope for U.S. support, pointing to the lack of a permanent U.S. military presence in the Caribbean, the need for radars on all Eastern Caribbean islands, the refurbishment of two planes in Barbados, and the need for a fifth plane to ensure complete air surveillance of the Eastern Caribbean. He mentioned his wish to expand the Advance Passenger Information System to all of the Caribbean, perhaps working through the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). Manning requested duty free entry to the United States for iron, steel, aluminum products, plastics, and all products packaged in Trinidad and Tobago. He claimed that while Trinidad and Tobago was a good partner to the United States, as evidenced by its role as principal supplier of liquefied gas, methane, and ammonia, this partnership was not recognized in the U.S. The Deputy Secretary commended Trinidad and Tobago's leadership on security issues in the Caribbean and noted our interest in remaining engaged. End Summary.

Security in the Caribbean

¶4. (C) Prime Minister Patrick Manning spoke at some length about security concerns shared by the governments

of the Eastern Caribbean states. He highlighted the June 13-14 military conference hosted by Trinidad and Tobago to bring Caribbean Community (CARICOM) members together to address growing crime and drug trafficking through the region, particularly the Eastern Caribbean. Manning stressed the need for CARICOM members to pool resources and work together to counter the increasing law enforcement challenges. He noted Trinidad and Tobago's proximity to Venezuela and the risks posed to the island nation from increased drug trafficking through Venezuela. Manning hopes the existing Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), established with U.S. assistance for the 2007 Cricket World Cup, can be expanded to include all Caribbean nations possibly working through the Association of Caribbean States, whose membership is made up of all states bordering the Caribbean, including Cuba and Venezuela. Manning said it was imperative for all Caribbean states to be able to share passenger information for both arriving planes and vessels.

15. (C) Although Manning did not present a shopping list of desired hardware, his meaning was evident as he pointed to the permanent presence of Dutch and British frigates in the Caribbean as well as the stationing of a French frigate during hurricane season, contrasting them with the absence of a permanent U.S. military presence in the Eastern Caribbean. Manning went on to enumerate the recent or planned acquisitions by Trinidad and Tobago of six intercept vessels, four helicopters, and radars for Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He stressed that radars were needed for the rest of the islands in the Eastern Caribbean. Manning mentioned that Trinidad and Tobago was refurbishing two planes with radars/infrared and that Barbados had two planes that also needed refurbishing. He did not, however, reiterate Trinidad and Tobago's previous request that the United States fund the refurbishing of Barbados' planes. (Note: The four planes are C-26s provided by the United States to the two nations a number of years ago.) Manning told the Deputy Secretary that once fully operational the four planes could provide adequate air surveillance for the Eastern Caribbean region, but that a fifth plane was necessary to assure complete coverage.

16. (C) The Deputy Secretary welcomed Trinidad and Tobago's engagement on security issues, noting that narcotics trafficking has been a problem in the region for many years. He added that the balloon effect from the Merida Initiative would be felt in the Caribbean. The Deputy Secretary highlighted the efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard as well as those of the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force - South (JIATF-S) to counter trafficking in the Caribbean. He encouraged PM Manning to visit JIATF-S if the opportunity presented itself. The Deputy Secretary informed the Prime Minister that expansion of APIS would have to be coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security.

Deportees

17. (C) Prime Minister Manning touched briefly on the issue of criminal deportees from the United States to Trinidad and Tobago, blaming them in part for the rising crime rate. A/S Shannon noted that non-U.S. citizens would continue to be subject to deportation if they committed crimes. He mentioned that as a result of the discussions during the June 2007 U.S.-CARICOM Summit and Conference, the United States had initiated pilot programs in three countries to help with the reintegration of criminal deportees.

Trade: The Second Agenda

18. (C) Describing it as his second agenda, Prime

Minister Manning raised the question of trade and trade preferences. Manning asked for duty free entry to the United States for iron, steel, steel products, plastics, and all products packaged in Trinidad and Tobago, arguing that the amount of these imports was too small to affect U.S. markets. He explained that investment in these sectors in Trinidad and Tobago could grow, helping the economy, if the products had duty free entry into the United States. Manning complained that as the supplier of 70 percent on liquefied natural gas, 75 percent of methane, and 75 percent of ammonia for the United States, Trinidad and Tobago had proved itself a good partner for the United States, but it did not get anything in return from the United States. He added that Trinidad and Tobago could get higher prices and more immediate returns for its exports if it sold them to Mexico or Brazil.

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